

DONIZETTI DA CAMERA

Redbridge Young Musicians
at the Purcell Room, London's South Bank
22nd October, 1978

This review is not intended as a critical appraisal of either the works performed or the manner of their performance, but is simply an account of what proved to be a most enjoyable evening. A near-capacity audience (most of whom probably thought of Donizetti as an exclusively operatic composer) listened with obvious enjoyment to the well-selected instrumental and vocal items, and the spontaneous and enthusiastic applause which greeted each of the numbers was a clear indication of the pleasure the various works had given.

Discussing the concert afterwards was also a most gratifying experience. Some people had liked the piano pieces best; others the soprano and baritone songs; while yet others had found particular interest in the more unusual items, such as the Sonata for Flute & Harp, and the Trio for Flute, Bassoon and Piano with which the concert had ended. One thing, above all, was clear -- both Donizetti and the talented young artists taking part had created a highly favourable impression.

Inevitably one recalled what Donizetti himself, at the age of 18, had written to his teacher, Giovanni Simone Mayr, on entering the Liceo Filarmonico at Bologna: "From my harmonious pen, let enchanting accents pour." They had, indeed.

Perhaps the concert is best summed up in a short speech by the evening's Guest of Honour, Sir Robert Mayer, C.H., whose words "Small is beautiful" put the situation in a nutshell. The works themselves may not have had the grandeur of some large-scale compositions by other composers, but they certainly had a charm and appeal of their own, which were both delightful and endearing.

The Society expects shortly to issue a record giving a representative selection of items from the programme, and I hope that many readers of this News-Letter will find Donizetti's lesser-known compositions as attractive as that Purcell Room audience undoubtedly did.

GORDON BELLINGHAM.